Chapter One.

The Image of God in Man

One of the interesting realities presented in the preamble of the book of Genesis is the fact that man is created in the image of God. The book of Genesis lays both the beginnings of our world and the very human existence and it is to this fact that theologians refer to it as “the book of the beginnings”.

The opening words of the book of genesis answer a lot of questions regarding the origins of the world and that of the human family. It reads “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” implying that all things that exist in our world today get their beginnings in God who existed before the beginning of our beginnings. All creation traces its origins to the very existence of God. Humans and the other creatures depend on God for life.

In the first chapter of the book of Genesis, the bible gives a detailed account of God’s creational work that lasted six days. The work that brought this world into existence. Both inanimate and animate are formed from the precious hand of the creator. All that exists in the world today is made by God. From the smallest molecule to the largest atom, all took the creator’s precious time to so beautifully shape them.

Of all the creature’s God created, the creation of man stands out to be unique. The uniqueness comes from the fact that man is created in the image of God. In creating man, God did not use the pattern he used in creating the other creatures. The bible points out clearly that during the creation of all the creatures, it was marked with the words “Then God said” “and it was” so in essence, God spoke and it occurred as his word directed. The world and all in it were created with the spoken word of God except man.

In the creation of man, God shifted his method that he had employed earlier. In the previous creational activity, God’s words preceded while in the creation of man his words came last when he was addressing man. The creation of man is like no other because it begins with a consultation between the members of the Godhead. The bible says “and God said, let’s make man in our image”. This consultation elevates man to be a special creature among all the created creatures. Man was the crown of God’s creative act and therefore had to be created in a special way.

The bible continues to say in Genesis 1:27 “so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them”. This practically means that man is created in the image and

the likeness of God. Humans are not just in the image of God but they are the image of God. We are not just bearing the inscription of God in us but rather we are the inscription of God. Humanity was created after the divine similitude. One may ask, why was man created last after all the other creatures were created? There are two answers to this question 1. The creation was moving from the least important to the greatest hence giving man a great honor of being created last, 2. Man was created last so that it doesn't seems like he was a helping hand to God during the creational work.

So then, how are we as humans in the image of God? What does the phrases in the image of God mean? And what does it mean to us to be in the image of God? Several suggestions have been given by theologians in aspect to man being in the image of God. But today there seems to be a general understanding that the image of God is not something that is located in us but who we are as humans.

The image of God encompasses the totality of our being as humans. Ellen white further asserts that "God created man in his own image. Here is no mystery. There is no ground for the supposition that man was evolved by small degrees of development from the lower forms of animal or vegetable life. Such teachings lower the great work of the creator to the level of man's narrow earthly conceptions. Men are so intent upon excluding God from the sovereignty of the universe that they degrade man and defraud him of the dignity of his origin"

To be in the image of God is an honor heaven has bestowed upon humanity. What an honor to be in the image of God!! We will therefore explore these aspects of God's image in us.

Ellen white helps us get a quick glimpse of what it means to be in the image of God. She writes "When Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker. God created man in His own image (Genesis 1:27)…." Education.15.1

The image of God and His likeness in man consist of the mental, physical, spiritual, and social faculties.

Mental likeness

Man is given mental powers to think and do—given actually the freedom of choice to decide for himself. He is created independent of thought. Man has the ability to develop his thinking powers and expand on them. Today, from the vintage of our eyes, we can see the advancement made

by human technology. All these developments came as a result of God's mental potentiality in man. The mind we have today wasn't made for decoration but for thinking. Among all the creatures, only humans have the ability to think concretely and develop something out of it. So, the human mind is one of the greatest assets that God has given us.

In our schools today, Ellen white advises teachers to train learners to be thinkers. She simply says "Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do. The men in whom this power is developed are the men who bear responsibilities, who are leaders in enterprise, and who influence character. It is the work of true education to develop this power, to train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought.

With our minds, we are structured after divine pattern. We cannot think as God does because we are finite beings with limitation. But we are thinkers just as God is.

The work God had assigned to man in Eden required the exercise of the intellect. Adam had to use his reasoning capacity to have dominion over the creation of God and govern it according to his divine will. The first instance we get Adam using his reasoning was in naming the animals. Giving these beautiful creatures names was some sort of a work that God had reserved for man to do as an act of stewardship and use of the mental faculties.

Therefore, we are made after the divine image mentally. No other creature in the universe shares such a privilege with God. We can reason, think and be able to develop something out of the existing matter.

Physical likeness.

In our physical appearance, God created us in His likeness and that's the reason He designed us by Himself. Someone may ask, "Does God have a physical look like humans? Does He have eyes, mouth, feet, and hands just like us?" Well, to answer these questions we need to let the Bible reveal who God is to us. Though God is referred to as Spirit in the book of John by Christ, the Bible indicates that some people have seen parts of God's person. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders saw His feet (Exodus 24:9–11). Although He refused to show His face, after covering Moses with His hands, God revealed His back to him as He passed by (Exodus 33:20–23).

Christ is described as “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15) and “the express image of His person” (Hebrews 1:3). He alone is the express image of the person of God. These passages indicate that God is a personal being and has a personal form. This should come as no surprise, for man was created in the image of God.

Ellen white further elaborates this fact clearly, she writes “man was to bear God’s image, both in outward resemblance and in character” and in another place she writes “in the beginning, man was created in the likeness of God, not only in character, but in form and feature.”

In essence, we resemble God and have a form such as his for he is a personal God.

Spiritual likeness.

We humans are created as religious beings. We are designed in such a way that we can have a meaningful relationship with God, something the other creatures do not have. there is a common language between God and humans that makes it possible for us to understand ourselves and be able to have a meaningful relationship. In the human hearts, God has placed a vacuum that can only be filled by His presence in our lives. That’s why we all strive to at least worship something because we are created as spiritual beings.

In Eden when God created Adam, he first established a strong relationship with him. The first being known to Adam was God. Before Adam was introduced to the woman and the entire created universe, he had to first know God for himself. The same scenario was done in the case of Eve, we all read that God had made Adam to have a deep sleep when his rib was being taken out of him. So, when Eve came to life, the first person she saw and interacted with was God. She had to first know God for herself before she could know Adam and the rest of the created universe. This entails that human are to know God for themselves on personal basis. We derive our being and meaningful relationship from that of ours with God.

Social likeness.

In His social likeness, we as humans associate with one another exactly the way Godhead does. The Godhead doesn’t act and do things independently of each other but are unified in their work cooperatively. Bible passages such as “Let’s make man in our image,” “Let’s go down and confuse their languages,” and “Who will go for us?” indicate the social networking within Godhead. In this kind of socializing, God has

made us like himself. We cannot get meaning to our lives in total isolation and solicitude. Human relationships come next to that of ourselves with the creature. God created human relationships as part of our being. Something that is ingrained in us.

God has given us the ability to socialize just like Himself in heaven. We are to dwell on earth in families, tribes, and nations, and have international relations within us. We are made up of nations today with boundaries and yet of one blood; therefore, we are to live in unity with one another. Social boundaries and differences of ethnicity don't justify any act of discrimination and racism but demonstrate the beauty of diversity. The ability to socialize is from God.

God instituted marriage immediately after creation to create for man an environment for social interaction. Man was further instructed to multiply and be fruitful, implying a sense of social belonging. Families as they are today are the invention of God to satisfy our social wants and needs.

Furthermore, the last six commands of the decalogue instruct us to live peacefully in our societies. This is summarized by Jesus when he said "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets". In short, genuine love for God will breed love for fellow man.

If we all heed to the divine command, many of the societal calamities will be minimized. Theft, adultery, murder, false accusations and many more evils.

As social beings, we are accountable for our influences in the community, schools, churches and families. Our relationship with God is fully manifested in our daily interaction in the society.

God's purpose in creating man after his Divine image.

We have just learned that humans are the image God. What purpose did God have in mind when making us in his own image? All the faculties we possess were and are meant for development. God wanted man to develop his mental faculties, physical fitness, social life and spirituality. These faculties were made in such a way that they can be developed. Ellen white gives a profound insight on this development, she wrote "All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase."

God did not only create man with faculties that can be developed but gave provisions and space for their development. Adam was placed in

Eden as a learner. God was his teacher and the garden of Eden was the school in which he was to learn. So, the environment about him was educative. For man to fully develop his faculties, God had to make him a student. God invented the system of education in Eden to train and develop man so that his image may be fully revealed.

Ellen white explains this clearly by writing “The system of education instituted at the beginning of the world was to be a model for man throughout all aftertime. As an illustration of its principles a model school was established in Eden, the home of our first parents. The Garden of Eden was the schoolroom, nature was the lesson book, the Creator Himself was the instructor, and the parents of the human family were the students.”

Eden was indeed a wonderful school for our first parents. Before Adam was the entire universe for his research and studies. God has made us leaners naturally in order to develop ourselves.

Lastly, man was created as a special unique being capable of learning and having a personal relationship with God while governing the world and having absolute dominion over it. The psalmist summarizes it this way in Psalms 8:5-8 “For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen—Even the beasts of the field, The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas”.